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DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



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A CHILD WELFARE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

The State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) has increasingly sharpened its focus on the growing issue of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) afflicting children involved with the child welfare system. Human Trafficking is the third most profitable criminal industry in the world, generating an estimated \$32 billion per year. ⁽¹⁾ Most simply, DMST constitutes modern day slavery. The reaction of moral outrage that is prompted in the face of such child victimization has fueled considerable work here at the Department to galvanize a system-wide collaborative effort to combat it.

While much attention has been paid to this human rights violation in other countries, including Cambodia and Thailand, it is perhaps less widely understood that child trafficking is occurring in the United States at an alarming rate. The United States Department of Justice estimates that 200,000 American children are potentially trafficked each year into the sex trade. The United States Department of State "Trafficking in Persons Report 2010" found that the majority of domestic victims enslaved in the sex industry are runaway and homeless youth. Nationally, 450,000 children run away from home each year. One of every three teens on the street will be lured toward prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. This means at least 150,000 children are lured into prostitution each year. The average age of children victimized by pornography and prostitution in the United States is 12 years old ⁽²⁾. Data shows that children who are involved with child welfare services and in the foster care system are at a much higher risk to be recruited into the sex industry and prostitution.

Connecticut DCF has been and remains committed to addressing the issue of trafficking within our borders. Since 2008, when collaborative efforts in Connecticut significantly increased -- both internally at DCF and externally with the community -- there have been approximately 100 children who have been identified and confirmed as victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. Of the victims identified, **ninety-eight percent** have been involved with child welfare services in some manner. Many of these children have been victimized while in foster care or congregate care. Connecticut DCF has put forth tremendous efforts to end the sale of our children. These efforts fall within three main categories:

- IDENTIFICATION AND RESPONSE
- AWARENESS AND EDUCATION
- RESTORE AND RECOVERY

IDENTIFICATION AND RESPONSE

Efforts to combat trafficking in Connecticut go back almost a decade. Here is a brief timeline of the activity:

- In 2004, Special Act 04-8 established an interagency task force on trafficking in persons to collect data on the nature of trafficking in the state and evaluate the state's progress on trafficking. DCF is appointed to serve on the taskforce.
- In 2006, Public Act 06-43 established the class B felony of trafficking in persons and allows a trafficking victim to bring a civil case to recover penalties, actual damages, and statutory damages.
- In 2007, June Special Session, Public Act 07-4 Section 29 established that the Office of Victim Services within the Judicial Department shall contract with nongovernmental organizations to develop a coordinated response system to assist victims of trafficking. It placed a primary focus on adult/international victims.
- In 2007, Public Act 07-107 created an interagency *Trafficking in Persons Council* within the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, again with a primary focus on adult/international victims.
- In April of 2008, the DCF Careline received a call from the International Institute of Connecticut in Bridgeport reporting an anticipated police raid on a suspected human trafficking ring. Prior to the raid, it was believed that a minor child was present, however, no child was found during the raid. In response to that call, the Division of Multicultural Affairs and the DCF Careline collaborated to construct a system response for how future suspected cases would be handled moving forward.
- In 2009, the DCF Human Trafficking Response Team was assembled. This team was responsible for creating the DCF Response Protocol. The protocol provided a framework for how cases would be handled during normal operating hours and after the regional DCF offices closed.
- Also in 2009, DCF began its collaboration with the Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC). CCMC became the designated Emergency Room for victims, in acute situations, needing medical and psychiatric assessment/care.
- In 2010, DCF issued Policy 31-10-6.1: INTAKE AND INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING and the DCF Response Protocol.
- In 2010, given the increase and nature of DMST cases, DCF established a partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigations in New Haven.

- Also in 2010, the DCF Careline developed a system of tracking cases of Human Trafficking that are reported to the FBI. This tracking system provides the number of victims in Connecticut and is able to analyze how many children are repeat victims, which cities have the highest rates of trafficking, victimization while on AWOL status, incidents involving children in a congregate care setting with multiple victims, etc.
- In 2010, DCF put into operation the capacity for the DCF Careline to accept reports of suspected Human Trafficking/DMST as a child protection case without the identification of a legal guardian or entrusted person listed as a perpetrator of abuse and/or neglect.
- Up to 2010, the state's efforts were focused on adult and international instances of human trafficking. It is at this critical juncture that child victims came to the center of the effort to combat trafficking. Beginning in 2010, Connecticut enacted two laws that specifically address children who are exploited via sex trafficking, DCF assisted with the development and advocacy of these changes to better address the needs of victims and to be in compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2008 (TVPA).
- In 2010, Public Act 10-115, "An Act Providing a Safe Harbor for Exploited Children," became law. The law amended Conn. General Statutes Section 53a-82 to require that a person must be sixteen years of age or older to be guilty of prostitution. The law also required in any prosecution of a person sixteen or seventeen years of age that there must be a presumption that the he or she was coerced into committing such offense by another person.
- In 2011, Public Act 11-180 was enacted requiring that police report suspected abuse or neglect to the DCF Careline upon the arrest of any youth for prostitution.
- In 2011, DCF established a partnership with the United States District Attorneys Office, as identified cases begin to be prosecuted.
- In 2011, DCF Program Review and Evaluation Unit, which oversees the congregate care facilities in the state, established a tracking system for victims in care.
- In 2011, DCF allocated more internal resources to address the issues of DMST.
- In 2011, the DCF Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART) is renamed, reorganized and now includes the Office of the Victims Advocate (OVA).
- In 2012, Public Act 12-141 was enacted defining commercial sexual exploitation of a minor as a person who knowingly purchases advertising space for an

advertisement for a commercial sex act that includes a depiction of a minor.
Commercial sexual exploitation of a minor is a class C felony.

- In 2012, the DCF HART Team expands to include community providers.
- In 2012, the DCF Practice Guidelines were completed articulating the expected response to DMST case utilizing a multidisciplinary approach.
- In 2012, DCF Regions assign leads to the HART Team.

Current Identification and Response Efforts and Initiatives, include:

- DCF is working with the state's Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) to become the primary identification and first responder resource for victims. Connecticut currently funds 15 MDT's throughout the state to provide a coordinated interagency approach to enhance the investigation and management of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse cases. To achieve this, these teams facilitate meetings where cases are presented for purposes of planning both the investigation of allegations and the interventions required to support child victims and their families. MDTs were established in statute (C.G.S. Sec 17a-106a) and currently exist in almost every judicial district in the state. The MDT process has been identified as a promising practice for suspected victims of DMST given the acute trauma victims are exposed to and the need for a coordinated systems response.
- DCF is forming a Results Based Accountability framework for DMST in order to track, in a formalized manner, the successes and evolution of its efforts.
- DCF's collaboration with Connecticut Children's Medical Center continues to be defined. DCF has added Yale-New Haven Hospital and St. Francis Hospital to this effort and continues to reach out to other hospital emergency departments throughout the state.
- DCF organized a nursing/medical team to define best practice approaches for nursing staff in congregate care settings, as well as school-based health centers.
- DCF is in the process of developing a response team to research best practices for male victims. DCF currently has five identified male children/youth who have been victims of sex trafficking.

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

In 2005, the DCF Training Academy (re-organized now as the Academy for Family and Workforce Knowledge and Development), in collaboration with the Division for Multicultural Affairs, developed a one-day training on human trafficking. At that time, the focus of the training was mainly on international adult victims, in accordance with federal mandates.

In 2009, the DCF Academy created an eight-day Adolescent Certification Training that included a half-day provided by Paul & Lisa, a Connecticut organization that worked to raise awareness on national children's issues and provided services to victims. As the number of DMST victims identified in Connecticut increased, the need to expand that training became evident. As a result, a one-day training on DMST was developed. Training has been offered monthly since then and has been incorporated into mandatory trainings for DCF staff who respond to reports of abuse and neglect and who work specifically with adolescents. In addition, this training has been open to and attended by community providers working directly with our children in the community and in congregate care.

Beginning in 2009, meetings with the local chiefs of police, juvenile court judges, prosecutors and public defenders took place in order to raise awareness on DMST, including the statutory changes, the new DCF response protocol, and to enhance collaborative efforts to meet the needs of this vulnerable population. In 2011, DCF attended police departments training sessions across the state to continue education regarding these developments, including identifiers and approaches.

Additional prior awareness and education initiatives included:

- A second day was added to the DCF Academy's DMST training to focus on the issue of demand for child victims. This training focuses the prevalence and impact of pornography, laws and issues related to child pornography, predators, sex offenders, internet predators and safety, the impact of social media, the glorification of the pimp culture, and insights into who victimizes children/youth via prostitution and pornography.
- DCF conducted one-hour training sessions for emergency medical response staff on DMST indicators, effective approaches with potential victims, and the need to call the DCF Careline about any suspected case of trafficking.
- DCF trained Emergency Room Physicians from across the state and provided targeted ED trainings.

- DCF furthered its collaborative efforts with LOVE 146, an international agency based in New Haven that works to abolish sex slavery and now has a United States Prevention Division. This collaboration includes raising public awareness with educators and other community stakeholders.
- DCF strengthened collaborative efforts with the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS), a statewide coalition of sexual assault crisis programs, to include work on DMST. CONNSACS works to end sexual violence through victim assistance, community education, and public policy advocacy. DCF has provided training to sexual abuse crisis responders on the indicators of DMST and the DCF response protocol.
- The DCF Academy created a learning experience entitled "Man UP: A Youth Series to Transform the Male Perspective of Women and Its Impact on Sexual Exploitation" in collaboration with staff at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, Connecticut's secure facility for boys who have been committed to the Department as delinquents. This innovative youth series, consisting of ten one-hour group sessions, challenges the boys to end the demand that perpetuates the sexual exploitation of women and children by defining and reshaping what manhood means to them. The pilot session was held from March 2nd to May 18th, 2012. Initial feedback from youth was promising and exceeded expectations.
- DCF began to train foster parents on DMST.
- DCF has made presentations and provided information to raise public awareness about DMST with various community stakeholders.
- DCF developed a Train the Trainer program to increase training capacity.
- The Girls' Provider Network worked with girls from across the state to develop a bracelet with the Hotline number; bracelet has been completed and is now being distributed to girls across the state.

Current Awareness and Education Efforts and Initiatives include:

- DCF will expand its current training on trafficking to a three-day DMST Certification Training. The first day educates participants on the scope of the DMST issue with specific emphasis on Connecticut's children. The second day addresses demand and perpetrator profiles. Day three will focus on the acute trauma of this victimization and educate participants on the "Stages of Change Model" when working with victims. It will also encompass motivational interviewing skills, working with young men and available resources. This series will be available to all staff and to community providers.
- DCF created a two-hour post-certified training for Connecticut's law enforcement agencies to raise awareness on the scope of the issue, the new statutory

provisions, 11-180, and to strengthen collaboration between child protective services and law enforcement to better identify and respond to Connecticut's victimized children.

- The DCF Man UP program (see above) began its second run on August 22, 2012. A Man UP facilitators curriculum guide is under development to allow future sessions to be held at additional locations and reach a wider audience of male youths.
- DCF is developing a series of curriculums to meet the needs of various audiences, including one and two hour trainings, a three-day certification course, and a supervisory series that will enable area office units to receive trainings on DMST identifiers and service referral.
- The Academy is working with the DCF Office of Foster and Adoptive Services and the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents to ensure that foster parents are knowledgeable of the dangers of DMST and the vulnerability of children involved with the Department.
- The Academy is working with various foster care agencies to develop a specialized model and training program for families working with survivors.
- DCF, in collaboration with community providers, has posted a resource guide available to youth online through the DCF website.
- DCF has begun to train its Multi Disciplinary Team's across the state to prepare the teams for case response.
- DCF expanded training to public defenders and child protection attorneys on the identification of DMST.
- DCF is developing an educational brochure for parents and youths involved with the Department who are at the highest risk of victimization.

RESTORE AND RECOVERY

Previous activities to restore and support recovery for child victims include:

- Starting in 2009 and 2010, DCF collaborated internally and externally to meet the clinical needs of victims as they were identified. The Department continues to research various efforts occurring throughout the United States to respond to this need.

- In 2010, DCF established a relationship with the Justice Resource Institute (JRI) and Lisa Grace, co-founder and director of the "My Life, My Choice" program. Through this collaboration, trainings for community and congregate care providers have been offered on meeting the psychological needs of DMST survivors. This training is offered quarterly.
- In 2010, the My Life, My Choice program, training on DMST awareness and a ten-week group curriculum for youth was offered via Love 146. Funding for these efforts has been restored.
- In 2011, DCF created the Human Trafficking Clinical Team which aims to address the needs of identified DMST victims from a trauma informed practice lens.
- The DCF Girls' Provider Network, which is a team of public and private providers serving adolescent girls in various levels of care, worked to expand the availability of the My Life, My Choice program to community and congregate care providers.
- DCF expanded its established relationship with the North American Family Institute (NAFI), which provides an array of services to both male and female children, including congregate care in both a secure and non-secure setting. DCF and NAFI collaborated in the development of emergency beds for adolescent female victims needing immediate placement.
- DCF established a formal collaboration with the Council on Accreditation (COA) to assist in the development of best practice standards responding to DMST of children in congregate care and foster care to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children. In addition, standards for mentoring services now include DMST specific requirements.
- DCF offers specialized case consultation to regional office staff after notification of a possible DMST case.

Current "Restore and Recovery" efforts and initiatives include:

- DCF is working with community provider agencies to develop specialized foster homes who demonstrate knowledge of and a long-term commitment to a relapse-prevention approach.
- DCF completed specialized credentialing for mentors to serve this population.

- DCF is currently developing additional placement resource options for identified victims given the increasing need for comprehensive clinical services.
- DCF Practice Guidelines for meeting the medical and mental health needs of suspected and identified victims of DMST have been finalized.

1. ILO, A global alliance against forced labor: 2005.

2. National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children/NISMART-2